

OVERVIEW

OF THE SELF-CONFRONTATION BIBLE STUDY

Welcome to the Self-Confrontation Bible Study. This Bible Study presents biblical principles that God will use to change your life, as you apply them to your personal situation. These principles are contained in the Bible, which is the authoritative source for how to live a victorious and contented life in the power of the Holy Spirit. These principles are applicable in all cultures and do not change. They apply to the young and the elderly, to the poor and the wealthy, to the healthy and the ill. Therefore, you can be confident that the biblical principles taught in this study are also applicable to you no matter what situation, test, or trial you may experience.

This *Student Workbook* is designed to lead you through a personal life-application study of God's Word using the *Self-Confrontation* manual as a reference. This life-application focuses on living according to the two greatest commandments stated by Jesus Christ: loving God and loving your neighbor (*Matthew 22:37-39*). God also warns in His Word, that "*the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen*" (*1 John 4:20*). Relationships on this earth are direct indicators of our relationship with God. This Bible Study focuses on having a right relationship with the Lord and with our neighbor. Our "neighbor" does not refer to just the person next door; it is all-inclusive. It includes those we find easy to get along with as well as those who seem to be difficult. It includes our family members, employers, employees, students, teachers, church family, acquaintances, and even those we would call our enemies. Many believers struggle with their relationships with others and become defeated in the way they handle the matters of life. This is usually because self gets in the way; there is a great battle between the flesh and the spirit (*Galatians*). It is necessary to deal with this war within; hence the title "Self-Confrontation."

The "Love Test"

You may be wondering why you should be doing a Bible Study in self-confrontation at this point in your spiritual life, especially if you have been a Christian for many years, or if you are involved in discipling others. You may be thinking that you have matured spiritually beyond the need for continued self-confrontation. So let's conduct an exercise that will help you determine how much you may need to practice self-confrontation.

EXERCISE: THE LOVE TEST

Let's start by looking at God's standard for success in life. Please read *Matthew 22:37-40*. In *verse 40* Jesus summarized all the commandments in Scripture with just two. What are those two commandments? (fill in the blanks below)

1. _____

This passage clearly shows that God's standard for the believer's life is wholehearted love. This is quite a contrast from the way we evaluate success. Our human evaluation of a person's success is often based on how much Scripture a person knows, how many individuals he has led to the Lord, how well he can preach, how skilled or knowledgeable he is, how persuasive he is, etc. Since God says that loving Him and loving others are His criteria for evaluating us, we need to pay close attention to how to practice love.

In light of this standard of evaluation, rate yourself on how loving you think you are toward others on a scale of zero to ten. Rating yourself zero would mean you are not loving at all, and

ten would represent that you have perfect love. You do not need to show your rating to anyone else. Now, on a separate piece of paper, write down your rating.

You had some kind of criterion for measuring how loving you think you are. You might have thought, "Well, I'm not perfect, but I'm more loving than this other (specific) person." So, you may have rated yourself above a five. In other words, when we evaluate ourselves, we tend to compare ourselves with other people. But, instead of relying on our own opinions of what constitutes love, let's look at what God has given us as the characteristics (actions) of love by which we are to examine ourselves. Please read *I Corinthians 13:4-8a* and rate yourself again as you compare yourself with each of the scriptural characteristics or actions of love. Ask yourself, "When was the last time I was impatient (or failed to be forbearing or longsuffering)? In what ways have I been unkind to my family? Have I been jealous about anyone or about my rights or my time?" and so on. Now, in light of these biblical criteria for evaluation, does your number go down significantly?

2.

In addition to God showing us the actions (characteristics) of biblical love, He also tells us *how* to love. Read *John 13:14-15, 34-35*. How did Jesus say we are to love?

3.

Now, read *John 13:4-5*. This passage gives us just one example of how Jesus demonstrated love. Since He is the perfect example we are to follow (*I Peter 2:21-22*), we are to evaluate our love using His example as the comparison. How did Jesus demonstrate His love to His disciples?

4.

Jesus set aside the traditional authority and dignity of a teacher by taking off his garments and washing their feet. In fact, Jesus said He did not come to be served but to serve. Loving means being a servant to others. We are to serve in the same way as Jesus did (*John 13:12-15*).

Now, seeing the standard of unselfish, sacrificial love demonstrated by Jesus, rate yourself again, not just based on *I Corinthians 13:4-8a*, but this time be more specific in its application to your life. Instead of saying the word "love," substitute your name (for example, "John is patient," "John is kind," etc.). After each descriptive phrase characterizing love, also bring the standard of Jesus Christ into the picture so that you will ask yourself, "Based on Jesus' example, am I as patient as Jesus was patient? Am I as kind as Jesus was kind?"

Is your number getting higher or lower?

5.

What have you learned from this exercise?

6.

The purpose of this exercise is not to discourage or humiliate you; rather, it should give you an appreciation of God's mercy and grace. It should also help you see the need for changes in your life. God loves us in spite of our sin, but His plan is for us to change into Christlikeness. In light of the ongoing battle within, between the flesh and the spirit, the need for change never ceases while we are on this earth.

By now, you may be saying to yourself, “What’s the use? My score is so low, I will never be like Jesus.” It is encouraging to remember how the Apostle Paul described himself. What does each of the following passages say about Paul?

In *I Corinthians 15:9*, toward the beginning of his ministry he described himself as

7.

Later, in *Ephesians 3:8*, further into his ministry, Paul described himself as

8.

And just before his death, in *I Timothy 1:15*, Paul described himself as

9.

The more Paul matured in the Lord, the more he saw himself as a sinner. It was not that he was sinning more; rather, he was increasingly aware of (sensitive to) his sin. It increasingly troubled him when he sinned. It also helped him increasingly to appreciate the grace and mercy of the Lord. This is a sign of spiritual maturity.

Let’s review what we have learned from this exercise.

First, this exercise reveals how we tend to measure ourselves by man’s standards rather than by God’s perfect standard.

Second, this exercise reveals how easily we tend to focus on self instead of focusing on God. That’s why confronting ourselves biblically is so important for as long as we live on this earth. The need to examine and confront self never ends.

The “**Love Test**” also tells us something about people we teach or disciple. Much of discipleship today is focused on activities and intellectual knowledge rather than on development of love for God and neighbor. We teach people how to conduct Bible studies and memorize Scripture but fail to teach them how to apply God’s Word in daily living. For example, how do you help a mother who has outbursts of anger when her child disobeys? How do you help a person who has been caught up in and now is dominated by various sinful practices? How do you help someone who thinks his childhood experiences (his past) or the way he was treated by others is his reason for not being an over-comer in the present?

In summary, this study will help you learn how to face, deal with, and endure any difficulty in life in light of God’s perfect standard as revealed in Jesus Christ and God’s Word, and to overcome the trials of life in a complete and ongoing manner. In addition to helping you deal with your own life, this study will also teach you how to disciple others in biblical patterns for living victoriously in all circumstances.

God’s Word versus our opinions

One of the most important things to remember in completing this Bible Study is not to rely on your own opinions or the opinions of others. You will frequently need to ask: “What does God say?” and “How does this Scripture passage apply to me?” You must resist the temptation to give others your personal experiences and make that a basis for teaching how to live. God has not promised to bless our own wisdom or our experiences; but He *has* promised to bless His Word (*Isaiah 55:11*). Only God’s Word is to be the source and basis for teaching us how to live — not man’s wisdom. This is always the emphasis of the Self-Confrontation Bible Study. If you are just being introduced to this material, you will realize very early that complete reliance on the Scriptures, not worldly wisdom, is the key to living a godly, contented life in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Materials for this study

Now let’s look at the materials you will be using for the study. You will need a Bible, the *Self-Confrontation* manual, and this *Student Workbook*.

The Bible

Since the Bible is the primary teaching source for God's commandments and precepts, it is important that you use a literal translation of the Bible. While a paraphrased Bible may be useful as an expansion or supplemental study tool, it is important to memorize and understand the Bible in its most literal form. Because paraphrases are not translations, but interpretations, they may focus on man's insights rather than God's truth at certain points. When you study for your own benefit or to minister to others, it is important that you remain as faithful as possible to God's Word.

The Bible is applicable to every culture. It goes against man's wisdom and traditions in dealing with life regardless of culture, just as Jesus went against men's traditions (even among the religious leaders) in His culture when He spoke about how to deal with the problems of life. On the other hand, the Bible speaks to every heart because it is God's Word to man.

The Self-Confrontation manual

The resource for this study is the *Self-Confrontation* manual, which you can think of as a manual for in-depth discipleship. It is not the source, as is the Bible, but is to be used as a reference to direct you back to God's Word. It is designed to guide you through biblical principles that are fundamental to living the kind of victorious, contented life God intended for His children, regardless of the circumstances. The manual will always direct you to God's Word, not to man's opinion. Sometimes we don't really want to heed God's Word, because it goes against our feelings, or it challenges us to change what we are doing. It might be easier to listen to man's opinions or to follow our feelings. But we know that following God's Word is *always* best for us, and He has given us the Holy Spirit to encourage us and to give us the power to follow in God's way.

The *Self-Confrontation* manual is not a book you can sit down and read like a novel. It is designed to be a reference book, and as such, it contains much more material than can be covered in the Self-Confrontation Bible Study. In a sense, it is like a topical concordance. It contains many biblical references that cover both the fundamentals of the Christian life as well as how to deal with specific problem areas. It is also useful when you are trying to find biblical principles that will help a family member or friend, but we must start by applying the principles to ourselves, hence the title *Self-Confrontation*. The *Student Workbook* will lead you through the foundational Scriptures and the essential sections of the *Self-Confrontation* manual in a series of 24 lessons.

Before we proceed further in the *Student Workbook*, let's look at the *Self-Confrontation* manual **TABLE OF CONTENTS** (*Self-Confrontation*, Page 6-10).

The lessons build on one another.

- Lessons 1-8 establish the basic foundation for living according to God's Word. Lessons 9-21 deal with specific problem areas. All the lessons are specifically placed in a sequence that is helpful for dealing with the typical problems of life.
- Lessons 9 and 10 deal with the problem of preoccupation with self. A biblical view of self is a necessary prerequisite to understanding how to deal with all other problems of life.
- The subjects anger and bitterness are next in Lesson 11 because they are involved to some degree in most problems.
- With this as a foundation, relationship problems can be addressed properly; thus the next six lessons deal with various interpersonal problems.
- After dealing with the subjects of depression, fear, and worry, the list ends with lessons on life-dominating practices of sin.

Also, on Page 10 of the manual, you will see a reference to the section at the end of the *Self-Confrontation* manual called **SUPPLEMENTS AND PRACTICAL HELPS**. The supplements include materials that are:

- Common to more than one lesson,
- Important application worksheets, and
- Detailed additional information for reference.

While the manual is copyrighted, in the footers of some of the supplements you are granted permission to reproduce the page for personal or ministry use.

Now let's look at the structure of each lesson in the manual using Lesson 1 as an example. Please turn to Page 17 in the *Self-Confrontation* manual.

- The title page of each lesson contains the memory passage for that lesson (Page 17).
- The first page of each lesson lists the purposes and the outline of the lesson (Page 18).
- Since the lessons are based upon biblical principles, the second, and sometimes also the third, page lists the relevant biblical principles (Page 19).
- The pages that follow are expansions of the biblical principles (Pages 20-24).
- Then, the last pages of each lesson contain homework and a study guide for daily devotions (Pages 25-27). You will not need to complete the homework in the *Self-Confrontation* manual since you will be answering questions that are interspersed throughout the lessons in this workbook.

In summary, it is important to keep in mind that the *Self-Confrontation* manual contains many Scripture references to direct you back to God's Word. The Bible is our primary source. The manual is merely the resource to direct us to the source — the Word of God.

The Student Workbook

This *Student Workbook* is designed to lead you through a personal "life-application" study of God's Word using the *Self-Confrontation* manual as a reference. Each lesson has blank portions to complete, based on passages from the Bible. This is part of what you might call your homework. But the most important part of the homework is your "doing the Word," applying the principles to your own life. That is where the meaningful, lasting change will come.

This *Workbook* leads you through the key points of each lesson in the *Self-Confrontation* manual. It covers only a portion of the material in the manual and provides additional illustrations and questions that will help you understand how the biblical principles apply to your life.

The *Student Workbook* is structured in the form of a Bible Study either for your own personal use (if you have no group leader) or with a small group. If you are completing this study with a group, usually you will first complete the study on our own in preparation for meeting as a group. Then, you will come together on a weekly basis to learn what God is teaching you through His Word. Your leader will provide biblical guidance, as you progress through the meeting.

NOTE: *The Self-Confrontation course can also be taken in a more formal teacher-student setting. If you are using the Student Workbook on your own, we would strongly recommend that you also take the course in a classroom or group setting when available. The Biblical Counseling Foundation has instructor's guides to allow the course to be taught in a once-a-week format or in a one-week concentrated course. Many people have taken the course multiple times, finding that God gives them additional insights and challenges them in different ways each time.*

How to complete this study

To study each lesson, follow the directions in this *Workbook*. It will direct you to the Scriptures and, where appropriate, to the associated portions of the *Self-Confrontation* manual. Typically, the *Workbook* will ask you to read a paragraph or section in the *Self-Confrontation* manual and look up the relevant scripture references in the Bible. When you see a reference to pages in the *Workbook*, the page number will have a “W” before it (for example, Page W1, Page W2, etc.). When you see a reference to a page in the *Self-Confrontation* manual, it will be without the “W” (for example, Page 1, Page 2, etc.).

Often, the *Workbook* will not go sequentially through the pages as they occur in each lesson of the *Self-Confrontation* manual. Rather, you may read a biblical principle, and then jump to a section that amplifies that principle. Just follow the directions in the *Workbook*, and you won’t get lost. If you are taking the study as part of a small group, bring your completed *Workbook*, your Bible, and your *Self-Confrontation* manual to the group meeting each week. When doing your study at home, you will need a table where you can have the *Workbook*, *Self-Confrontation* manual, and Bible handy all at the same time.

You should set aside a time each day to study. You may want to work on your lesson during the study portion of your daily devotional time. Each lesson also has a Scripture verse or verses to memorize. We will cover the importance of Scripture memory in Lesson 2. Usually, you will be able to complete each lesson if you spend about 20 to 30 minutes per day. Normally, each lesson can be completed within two hours of study each week.

There are 24 lessons in the Self-Confrontation Bible Study. Sometimes classes or groups taking the study together may decide that they will cover half the study in one series of classes. For example, they might cover Lessons 1 through 12 first, then 13 through 24 in a second study. This is a decision for your teacher or group leader and fellow students to make.

In either case, you will benefit most from this study if you keep up with the weekly study and the homework. That is one of the main objectives — to help you become immersed in God’s Word and to apply the biblical principles to your life. You can be assured that if you do the homework, and if you put into practice what God says to you through His Word in this study, you will be a changed person.